

Hegelianism and Christianity

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John Oman has written: ". . . We are waiting today for some change in philosophy away from Helegianism and the process of thought as the key to the universe, corresponding to the movement of science away from Newtonianism, with its assumption of the laws of motion as the efficient cause of things."¹ This statement reveals two things: first, that Hegel is still with us, and, second, that men who think as Oman thinks wish he were not.

Hegel's influence has been greatly under-rated precisely because his own claims were so greatly over-stated. Never in the history of thought did any man profess such exhaustive knowledge and practical omniscience. F. L. Patton, that master of verbal caricature, states it this way: "When Zophar the Naamathite put the question to his class, 'Who by searching can find out God?' an Hegelian, amid the silence of the school, courageously held up his hand."² Again: "Here, as a witty writer suggests, is a catastrophe the reverse of that of Korah; the earth has not swallowed up the man, but the man has swallowed up the universe."³ Unfortunately, though Hegel explained everything no one is sure he can explain Hegel. It seems that a student brought a passage to Hegel for explanation and the philosopher replied: "When that passage was written, there were two who knew its meaning—God and myself. Now, alas! there is but one, and that is

God."

There was one thing more surprising than the stupendousness of Hegel's claim and that was that his contemporaries believed it! But they did, and following a period of philosophical inebriation came the morning after and then the revulsion from which, it seems, philosophers are still suffering.

When this revulsion set in, the philosophers not only threw out Hegel's baby with Hegel's wash, but they threw out Hegel too. And it is proving very difficult for him to get back again. Hence, we hear much disparagement and little appreciation. Nevertheless, though Hegel's name may be anathema, many of his ideas, as Oman suggests, have become sacred.

Let us comment briefly on the Hegelianism of two of the world's outstanding philosophers, A. N. Whitehead and John Dewey. Opposed as each of these men is to the Absolute Idealism of Hegel, they nevertheless show striking affinity for his fundamental viewpoint. The German philosopher was most characteristically dissatisfied with anything lurking behind phenomena. Thus, he refuted the substance theory of Spinoza, the thing-in-itself of Kant and the absolute of Schelling. As Weber has stated: "In Hegel, the *absolute is the process itself*; it does not produce movement and life, it *is* movement and life."⁴ For Whitehead and Dewey also process is reality. In the former's *Process and Reality* existence and the natural order are ultimate, and God, if anything, appears to be its product, certainly not

¹ *Naturalism and Supernaturalism*, (Macmillan, 1931), pp. 107-108.

² *Fundamental Christianity*, (Macmillan, 1926), p. 38.

³ Harris, Samuel *The Self-Revelation of God*, (Scribners, 1887), p. 260.

⁴ Weber and Perry, *History of Philosophy*, (Scribners, 1925), p. 406.

its producer. Dewey's *Quest for Certainty* is significant here. He deplors the philosophical endeavor to find abiding ideas and prefers to believe in the world as flux or process. Thus Dewey finds uncertainty, and Hegel a kind of certainty, but the important thing is that they look in the same place. All of these philosophers find nothing behind phenomena.

Hegel's influence is by no means restricted to philosophical circles. Rather, as Dr. Brightman says:

It speaks well for the power of reason today that Hegel is still an influence in the world of affairs. No Hegel, no Marx-Engels-Lenin; no communism and no socialist critique of communist dogma. No Hegel, no Nazi theory of the state and no Liebert to indict it. No Hegel, no Gentile to organize the Fascist system of education and no Croce to defy Mussolini. It is from Hegel that Royce received much of his inspiration; from Hegel that Dewey took his start, and to Hegel he still looks as the greatest of the systematic philosophers.⁵

Nevertheless, our concern in this paper is with Hegel's significance in the realm of religion. Himself always an avowed Lutheran, Hegel's philosophy of Christianity was Janus-faced. His identification of the content of religion and of philosophy could be evaluated diversely. If one is impressed with the rational bulwark thus provided for religion, as is Hocking, the effect is conservative. If one is impressed with the complete rationalizing of religion, the effect is radical. Almost immediately after Hegel the theologians chose up sides, forming themselves into right and left wing Hegelians.

Among the conservatives, Daub and especially Biedermann are examples. Daub could write that the significance of Christ was that he exhibited the eternal incarnation of God and redemption of the world in his own person as a historical fact. Thus he

was the God-man in a unique sense.⁶ Biedermann supplemented Hegel by teaching that religious faith was a distinct element not to be equated with or dissolved by reason. But this faith presupposes revelation which it discerns immediately. H. R. MacIntosh in *Types of Modern Philosophy* describes Biedermann as the philosopher "who meant to be as Hegelian as possible, but always found Christianity breaking in."⁷

The radical wing found in Feuerbach and Strauss their ablest and most devastating exponents. Feuerbach reduced the absolute to man's size and ultimately, as a materialist, rejected all ideas including those of God which he called "Wunchwesen" or wishful thinking. In Strauss's *Leben Jesu*, the pictures of Hegel have become the "myths" of Christianity. In *Glaubenslehre*, religion in general seems to lose its savor. Finally Strauss asks himself, "Are we still Christians?" and answers: "If we would have our yea yea and our nay nay, in short, if we would speak as honest, upright men, we must acknowledge that we are no longer Christians."⁸ Pfeleiderer points out Strauss' significance in the history of Hegelianism.

Two previous works upon Immortality, the authors of which are Richter and Feuerbach, were reckoned among the Hegelian school, had indeed, by the radical negative conclusions therein reached by the application of this philosophy, shaken the confidence generally felt in Hegelian orthodoxy; but . . . produced no very important effect. When, however, Strauss brought the heavy artillery of his criticism, distinguished equally by learning and penetration, to bear, first, on the historical foundations of the dogma itself the unsubstantial fabric of Hegelian dogmatism was within a few years completely destroyed.⁹

⁶ Pfeleiderer, Otto, *The Development of Theology*, (Macmillan, 1890), p. 132.

⁷ H. R. MacIntosh, *Types of Modern Philosophy*, p. 133.

⁸ Quoted in Smith, H. B., *Faith and Philosophy*, (Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1877), p. 469.

⁹ *The Development of Theology*, (Macmillan, 1890), p. 132.

⁵ In Wieman, H. N., and B. E. Meland, *American Philosophies of Religion*, (Willett, Clark & Co., 1936), p. 319.

In England Hegelianism prevailed in a pure form at Oxford, but was gradually watered down. In the classroom, Dr. Brightman once gave his rating of some of the British thinkers and this is the score if my notes do not fail me: Bradley and Bosanquet, 100% Hegelian; Pringle-Pattison, 60%; Sorley, 40%; Ward, 0%. Dr. Ralph Barton Perry, rather more gleeful than sad, has a similar story to tell:

Thus the weakness of Hegel, from the later idealistic point of view, lies not in his general programme, but in the fact that he boldly set about carrying it out. He made too many positive assertions. The fact that Hegel *did* make positive assertions about natural evolution, about historical development, and about international politics, accounts for the fact that his philosophy was of vital consequence, and to many a source of inspiration. But today no one is more ready than the idealist to point out that Hegel made the mistake of forcing 'psychological' categories upon nature and history. He tried to deduce the actual cosmic process from the laws of spirit; and it is now generally conceded that he failed. Everyone but the idealist explains his failure by the falsity of the project itself; but he attributes it to the fact that Hegel's categories of spirit were not *purely logical*.¹⁰

Josiah Royce, George H. Howison and William E. Hocking stand as American exponents of modified Hegelianism. Royce turned his attention especially to the problem of the individual and evil, while Howison objected that Royce had not allowed sufficient place for the individual self and contended for a plurality of selves. The place of feeling in Objective Idealism is a particular concern of Hocking.

However, the most significant modern rôle of Hegelian religion is as thesis to Kierkegaard's antithesis. Hegel's was the original "both-and" against which Kierkegaard thrust his "either-or." When Hegel was confronted with what appeared to be contradictions he attempted, as we

shall see, to overcome them by his famous dialectical method—thesis and antithesis taken up into (*aufgehoben*) a higher synthesis. Kierkegaard was the policeman who, as soon as he saw the philosophical machine begin to grind its gears, blew his whistle, "Stop!" He was the champion of the unresolved contradiction. For Hegel religion was whole thought; for Kierkegaard it was shattered thought. Hegel relied on rationality; Kierkegaard cast himself upon the irrational. Hegel deified the intellect; Kierkegaard crucified it. For Hegel religion was a steady climb; for Kierkegaard it was a frantic leap.¹¹

For all Kierkegaard's earnestness, we doubt that he ever truly liberated himself from rationalism. As John Wild has pointed out.¹² Kierkegaard asserts the good is unknowable and paradoxical. But this is belied by two things: first, he makes no appeal to anything other than reason. Second, his three stages imply that man naturally comes to a knowledge of the good.

The spiritual seed of Kierkegaard, Barth and Brunner, show the same overt opposition to Hegel and the "System." Barth's anathemas are in no sense restricted to Hegel, since, as he says, whatever is Christian is not philosophical and whatever is philosophical is not Christian. His complete abhorrence of immanentism and utter devotion to the "absolutely Other," is hostile indeed to Hegel's God, who is in a very entangling alliance with this world and is the absolutely-not-Other."

Brunner's opposition to Hegel is rather more reasoned, which fact accounts for Barth's distrust of it. First, Brunner estimates Hegel's influence:

¹¹ Cf. esp. *Philosophical Fragments*, and *Concluding Scientific Postscript*.

¹² "Philosophical Review," Vol. XLIX, No. 5, Sept. 1940, p. 544.

¹⁰ *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, (Longman's, Green & Co., 1925), p. 177.

Since the time of Herder, Hegel, and Schleiermacher this scheme of a universal spiritual evolution, including also the Christian religion, has become a sort of scientific axiom which anyone who claims to be systematic must simply accept. This thesis of idealism has been rendered unobjectionable to theology by the circumstance that the conception of the individuality of religions seemed to give due place to the peculiar character of the Christian faith.¹³

Then, he criticizes Hegel's position fundamentally: "The decisive difference, therefore, consists in the fact that, for the idealist, the self-disclosure [of God] is fundamentally immediate, whereas for the Christian faith it is fundamentally mediated."¹⁴

We pass now from a consideration of Hegel's influence to date, back to Hegel himself and especially his philosophy of religion. The Alpha and the Omega of Hegel's system is the inclusiveness of the Absolute. Consequently his most frequently quoted statement, "Das Wahre ist das Ganze" is eminently characteristic of his thought. Being and all other categories are to be regarded as constituting the Absolute.¹⁵ In the *Science of Logic*, this view is set forth as the only adequate one, all other ones being inherently defective.¹⁶ Hegel's use of the term "Inbegriff" is significant.

The "Inbegriff aller Realität" is the sum total of all reality and the all-inclusive Begriff or concept. It is not only a sum but a new entity, the whole being more than the sum of its parts.¹⁷ Hegel's universal is no mere abstraction, because an abstraction is drawn off from and excludes reality; but Hegel's universal is concrete, including reality. Bosanquet devotes Lecture II of his *Principle of Individuality and Value* to the explication of this concept.

Because of the all-inclusive charac-

ter of the Absolute, Hegelians hesitate to use the word "person." F. H. Bradley, for example, uses the designation super-personal. Adherents of the Personalist School may regard Hegel's Absolute as including not one, but many persons, and feel that the Hegelian super-person though he may be more than, is not other than person. It is interesting to note, in passing, that C. S. Lewis thinks of God as "beyond personality" and that Calvin himself was almost tried for heresy because he did not like the term "persona" as descriptive of deity. However, any similarity between the latter's and Hegel's view of the Absolute are purely coincidental.

Since the Absolute includes all things, it follows that all things reveal the Absolute. Since all things are revelations of the Absolute, the Absolute can be known. Since all things constitute the Absolute and there is nothing more, the Absolute may be absolutely known. Hegel, in other words, is champion of the knowability of the Absolute and opponent of even partial inscrutability. This is not merely the logical conclusion of the *Phenomenology* and *Science of Logic*, but the prelude to his *Philosophy of Religion*.

Let us observe this further before commenting. The Absolute unfolds itself in the realm of concepts (cf. *Science of Logic* and in the realm of nature (cf. *Encyclopedia*, §§245 ff.) but only in the realm of mind, or spirit does the Absolute come to consciousness and freedom (cf. *Encyclopedia*, §§482ff.; esp. 553ff.).

The Absolute unfolds itself in triadic form also in the realm of spirit; first in art, then in religion, and supremely in philosophy. In art it appears in the form of sense objects which, although necessary for art, are an impediment to a purely rational perception by spirit. A more refined manifestation is found in the representations (Vorstellungen) of religion which are

¹³ Brunner, Emil, *Philosophy of Religion*, trans. by Farrer & Woolf, (Scribners, 1937), p. 128.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁵ *Encyclopaedic*, §75.

¹⁶ Vol. II, p. 456.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

picture-thoughts partaking of the sensuous because they are pictures and of the rational because they are thoughts. In philosophy the Absolute is seen immediately as pure thought.

This brings us to grips with Hegel's doctrine of revelation. Manifestly, his gnosticism was a great improvement over the agnosticism of Kant and Schelling. We agree with Maier in his *Hegel's Criticism of Kant* in which he shows that Hegel exposed the absurdity of Kant's talking about an object which could not be brought in relation to our consciousness. Kant's mysterious underlying reality, having no known qualities at all, could not be anything other than mind itself. This Hegel argued and then proceeded to conceive of mind as all that has being and thereby made reality knowable by itself. Likewise, he indicates the futility of Schelling's undifferentiated Absolute, the hidden reality that includes everything but in such abyssmal darkness that nothing can be seen, "the night in which all cows are black." Mure has pointed out that in his intellectual optimism, Hegel is reverting to the Greeks and away from Kant's revolution by which, as Perry says, the latter succeeded in "internalizing reason." Hegel thought of Plato and Aristotle as fundamentally the same and with them agreed that what is most real is *eo ipso*, that which is most intelligible. The philosopher's task, as Hegel saw it, was to prove this.

In this respect, we need Hegel today. To the liberals who despair of all certainty and are profoundly skeptical of the demonstrableness of truth he would say, "In the mental or spiritual there is now an infinite . . . capable of being communicated,"¹⁸ or, "the humility which affirms that the finite cannot know God nor come into direct relation to him, simply ascribes to God

powerlessness to make himself known."¹⁹ To the neo-orthodox, not resigned to but revelling in the irrational, he would say: "Things do not agree with ideas because you are on a level of thought where you cannot take all things into account."²⁰ And to the positivists and other secularists of our day, he would say: "What knowledge is worth knowing if God be unknowable?"²¹

There are two serious defects in Hegel's teaching concerning revelation. He makes too little of the apparatus for receiving the revelation and too much of general revelation itself. Even Pfeiderer admits that Hegel's sole reliance on thought as the recipient of the revelation is unwarranted. "Religion is essentially a matter of the heart."²² This criticism has been so generally made that it has become a cliché to classify Hegel as one who exaggerated the intellectual element in religion, alongside Kant who did the same with the volitional element and Schliermacher with the emotional. We need not elaborate.

While it is conceded that Hegel made too little of the apparatus for receiving revelation, it has not been especially noted that he made too

¹⁹ *Philosophie der Religion*, Vol. 1, p. 195, quoted in Harris, *Self-Revelation of God*, p. 91.

²⁰ *Science of Logic*, Vol. II, p. 397.

²¹ *Philosophie der Religion*, Vol. I, p. 27.

²² *Development of Theology*, p. 73. Cf. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 120. "Religion is not, as Hegel declared, a kind of knowing for it would then be only an incomplete form of knowledge, and the measure of knowledge in such case would be the measure of piety. . . . God is the subject of religion as well as its object. Religion is God's knowing of himself through the human consciousness. Hegel did not utterly ignore other elements in religion. 'Feeling, intuition, and faith belong to it,' he says, 'and mere cognition is one-sided.' . . . 'what knowledge is worth knowing, if God is unknowable.' . . . he gave even less place to the will than he gave to the emotions and he failed to see that the knowledge of God of which the Scripture speaks is a knowing, not of the intellect alone, but of the whole man."

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

much of general revelation. It would appear obvious that Hegel has obliterated the distinction between general and special revelation. If all things reveal the Absolute, because they are the Absolute, there can be no such thing as special revelation. What confuses the matter is that Hegel refers to Christianity as absolute religion and calls it "revealed."²³ Dr. Strong is correct when he states that: "Hegel, in his *Philosophy of Religion*, says that Christianity is the only revealed religion, because the Christian God is the only one from whom a revelation can come."²⁴ Nevertheless, it should be noted that this is quibbling with terminology. True, Hegel believed that the Christian conception of God was the only adequate, *viz.*, absolute, one. And only the Absolute could reveal the Absolute. And so the Christian God is the only one from whom revelation could come. But that is not the equivalent of saying that Christians were the only ones *to whom* it came or Christianity the only religion *in which* it came, which is the historic teaching of the Church.

The writer was once asked to demonstrate the fact that the church has maintained the views here indicated of special revelation. We referred the questioner to Schaff's three volume *Creeds of Christendom* where anyone who runs may yet read that the churches have uniformly testified to a unique once-for-all revelation in no sense to be confused with that natural revelation which is called "common" precisely because it is universal and at all times present. Let me give but one citation at random. In the Westminster Confession of Faith, for example, we read:

Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet they are not sufficient

to give that knowledge of God and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation; therefore it pleased the Lord . . . to reveal himself, and to declare . . . his will unto his Church.

In orthodox thinking special revelation is unique, once for all revelation. It occurred at one time and one place and to one people and is no general world phenomenon at all. The late Dr. Machen, who is regarded by Wieman and Meland,²⁵ as the outstanding representative of traditional supernaturalism, stresses the strict historicalness of Christianity:

Christianity depends, not upon a complex of ideas, but upon the narration of an event. Without that event, the world, in the Christian view, is altogether dark, and humanity is lost under sin. There can be no salvation by the discovering of eternal truth. . . . A new face has been put upon life by the blessed thing that God did when he offered up His only begotten Son.²⁶

Brunner also, one of the ablest exponents of neo-supernaturalism, sees through the spuriousness of Hegel's "special revelation," contrasting it with the Christian view:

To him the idealist history is merely a picture-book, whose text he knows without the aid of pictures; to him it means the idea made concrete, hence there is nothing decisive about it. In its absolute and serious sense, there is no room here for the category of uniqueness. . . . Hegel seemed able to absorb history into thought as Plotinus and Schelling did with Nature.²⁷

Oman, likewise, is not deceived:

Though Hegel's idea that in history we see in the furnace what is now built into life as cold and commonplace, was a great contribution to the whole method of studying history, in the end real history has no place in his intellectual construction. What masquerades as history is a show staged by dialectic, not history as a record of man's slow, laborious, often mistaken, constantly discouraged, learning from experience by the real hazard of dealing with environment.²⁸

We return to Hegel's exposition. On

²⁵ *American Philosophies of Religion*, p. 62.

²⁶ *Christianity and Liberalism*, p. 70.

²⁷ *The Mediator*, trans. by Olive Wyon, (Lutterworth Press, 1934), pp. 36-37.

²⁸ *Naturalism and Supernaturalism*, (Macmillan, 1931), p. 291.

²³ *Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. II, pp. 329-330.

²⁴ *Systematic Theology*, p. 27.

the level of religion, the dialectic, of course, moves through three stages. The thetic stage is that of the universal. God is the universal mind. When this universal mind, which cannot remain in this splendid isolation, sunders itself into particularity the anti-thetic stage is reached. This moment corresponds to the various positive religions. As a result of the union of the universal and particular moments the synthesis is achieved and we have what corresponds to the absolute religion.

In Christianity, with which we are primarily concerned, God is concrete spirit the first moment of which is God as He is before creation, the second is God in creation, and the third is God in the Church. In the first, God, as the universal in itself, is the Father. In the second, God, as particular, is the Son. In the third, God, as individual, is the Holy Spirit.²⁹

The pure heresy of such a view of the doctrine of the trinity is self-evident to anyone versed in the Biblical doctrine. Rather than submit my own criticism I will cite McTaggart whose testimony on this point is especially significant insofar as his concern in comparing Hegelian Trinitarianism and Christian Trinitarianism is purely academic, since apparently he is not devoted to either conception himself. As something of a neutral observer, he regards Hegel's Trinitarianism as missing the mark of ecclesiastical Trinitarianism.

According to Hegel's exposition, the Father and the Son are the Thesis and Antithesis of a triad of which the Holy Ghost is the Synthesis. It will follow from this that the Holy Ghost is the sole reality of the Trinity. Insofar as the Father and the Son are real, they are taken as correlative with the Holy Ghost, and as on the same level with the latter, they are taken wrongly and are not real. In other words, the Father and the Son are simply abstractions which the thinker

makes from the concrete reality of the Holy Ghost.

This may be the correct doctrine of the Trinity, but it is not the usual one. It must be noticed that it does not merely place the Holy Ghost above the other two members of the Trinity, but merges these latter in the Holy Ghost, which is therefore not only the supreme reality, but the sole reality God. And, again, the doctrine is more than the assertion that the relation of the members of the Trinity is not merely external. Doubtless it is not merely external, but internal and essential. But the point is as to the particular sort of relation. The Father and the Son are related to the Holy Ghost as something which is they, and more than they. But the Holy Ghost is related to the Father and the Son—if it is to be called a relation—in a very different manner. Each of them, so far as it is real at all, is the Holy Ghost. But each of them is less than the Holy Ghost. And so are both of them taken together.³⁰

McTaggart might have said that Hegel's doctrine was the procession of the Father and the Son from the Holy Spirit. Mackintosh does say: "This is certainly a piece of heterodoxy; possibly an inversion of Church teaching."³¹

We have dealt with "God in His eternal Idea in-and-for-self; the Kingdom of the Father." This phase of Christian revelation Hegel associated with the First member of the Trinity and reserved for consideration the other two members under the titles: "The eternal Idea of God in the element of consciousness and ordinary thought, or difference; the kingdom of the Son;" and "The Idea in the element of the Church or Spiritual Community; the kingdom of the Spirit." It is with the latter two divisions of the discussion that we are now concerned.

Much in the manner of John's statement that "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him"; Hegel says: "this Idea is now to be considered as it

²⁹ Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. III, pp. 1, 2.

³⁰ *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, (University Press, 1901), pp. 203, 204.

³¹ *Hegel and Hegelianism*, (T. & T. Clark, 1903), p. 259.

appears in the second element, in the element of manifestation in general."³² What was latent in the universal, namely differentiation, now becomes patent in the particular. Before, differentiation was "merely a movement, a playing of love with itself, in which it does not get to be otherness or Other-Being in any serious sense, nor actually reach a condition of separation and division."³³ Now, differentiation has become entire otherness: external, independent, alienated, different. Nevertheless, we are reminded that the separation or differentiation is still not yet complete. "What we have here is merely abstract difference in general, we have not yet got to difference in the form which peculiarly belongs to it."³⁴

The Notion, which we have already seen consists of three moments, now passes into nature. "The absolute freedom of the Idea means that in determining itself, in the act of judgment, or differentiation, it grants the free independent existence of the Other. This Other, as something thus allowed to have an independent existence, is represented by the World taken in a general sense."³⁵ This transition is one of logical necessity and is not to be confused with a temporal order although the term creation is used. Seth maintains that Hegel does not bridge the gap here between the logically necessary and the temporally generated otherness. And alienation is the result of otherness. Nevertheless, alienation is not fully manifested until man appears, for, as Pfleiderer remarks,

... the difference is not fully developed in nature, which remains true to its own essence and character. faithfully obeys its own laws, and does not step outside of the substance, the necessity of its being. Man, on the contrary, is called to be

or rather to become what he is essentially; it belongs to the notion of him that he should place himself over-against his nature, his present state, and enter into the division between his essence and his actual state. And his consciousness is itself the act by which this division is set up, for consciousness is the distinguishing of him, this particular subject, from himself, his universal being.³⁶

Thus Hegel has a doctrine of the fall but it is not the fall of man but the fall of God. That is to say, God by becoming finite or other, alienates Himself from Himself. This differentiated and finite self Hegel speaks of as man and thinks of him by virtue of his finitude and otherness as fallen, as evil.

Man is by nature evil; his potential Being, his natural Being, is evil. It is just in this his condition as one of natural Being that his defect is found; because he is Spirit he is separated from his natural Being, and is disunion. One-sidedness is directly involved in this natural condition. When man is only as he is according to Nature, he is evil.³⁷

It would appear that "man" was born fallen. Evil is not something alien to his nature but of the essence. He was born in sin and in iniquity did his God conceive him. Because he was a free, independent, particular being, he was a fallen being. It was not because he misused his freedom but because he used it; not because he violated his nature but because he expressed it, that he was a fallen creature. When Hegel's God rested from His creative activity He saw everything that he had made, including man, and, behold, it was very bad.

This account of the Hegelian conception of evil is thus far one-sided and inadequate. First of all, Hegel conceives of an original state of naturalness, a somewhat non-moral state; and secondly, man even in his fallen state is, in a sense, good as well as evil. This is what provokes William James' protest that Hegel "encour-

³² *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. III, p. 34.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁶ *The Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. II, p. 105.

³⁷ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. III, pp. 47, 48.

aged men to *see* the world good rather than to *make* it good."

This doctrine of evil proceeding from the Absolute Spirit implies that God himself includes evil. We have here the reverse of Christian Science reasoning. Mrs. Eddy argues: God is all, God is good, therefore, all is good. Hegel argues: God is all, all includes evil, therefore, God is evil. Of course, this conclusion is a logical one on a pantheistic presupposition. If the Absolute is all-inclusive, as Hegel believed, it must include evil.³⁸ Consistent as the conclusion may be, it is, as Mill believed, the reduction "*ad absurdissimum.*"

To say that man is by nature good amounts substantially to saying that he is potentially Spirit, rationality, that he has been created in the image of God; God is the Good, and Man as Spirit is the reflection of God, he is the Good potentially.³⁹ With this qualification in mind, we may state again that man although good in one regard, yet is alienated from God by nature. This condition of separation, however, sets up a longing, a feeling in which a tendency to reunion is generated. "In this division independence is set up, and evil has its seat; here is the source of evil, but also the point from which atonement ultimately arises. It is both the beginning of sickness and the source of health."⁴⁰

Separation produces sin and sin a desire for reconciliation. As the prodigal son became dissatisfied with his loneliness and his swine's fare and longed for the father's house where there was plenty and to spare, so the particular in the state of separation requires reunion with the universal.

³⁸ Cf. *Encyclopaedia*. §573; Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, 3rd Edition, p. 46; and Brightman, *The Problem of God*, (Abingdon Press, 1930), p. 83.

³⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. III, p. 46.

⁴⁰ Pfeiderer, *The Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. II, p. 106.

This desire is the tendency toward reconciliation which is as much in the nature of things as is the separation. Finite minds are restless till they find rest in the infinite mind. This reconciliation is realized when the infinite assumes finiteness. This logically necessary, eternally recurring movement of the infinite to the finite finds doctrinal expression in the Incarnation and Death of Jesus Christ.

It is a proof of infinite love that God identified Himself with what was foreign to His nature in order to slay it. This is the signification of the death of Christ. Christ has borne the sins of the world, He has reconciled God to us, as it is said.⁴¹

The movement back from the finite to the infinite is expressed doctrinally in the Resurrection and in the Ascension of Christ. God assumes finite nature even to the extreme point of the death of the infinite. This death, however, is swallowed up in infinity as God rises from death and ascends again. "This death is thus at once finitude and in its most extreme form, and at the same time the abolition and absorption of the natural finitude."⁴² By His Ascension to the right hand of God, Christ, says Hegel, demonstrates the dignity, worth, and identity of human nature with that of the divine nature.

We have arrived at the stage where the re-union has been effected. God and Man are one again. They had been one from the beginning but their diversity had been implicit. Now, after having affirmed most emphatically, and even tragically, their diversity they re-affirm their unity, not in spite of diversity but because of it.

The Spirit of God is in Man but not in the individual man. Rather His presence is where two or more are gathered together in the Community or Church. On the disciples the Holy

⁴¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. III, p. 93.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

Ghost descended at Pentecost and became their immanent life. Real and present life in the Spirit of Christ, that is Hegel's definition of the Church.

In the Spiritual Community as actually existing, the Church is emphatically the institution in virtue of which the persons composing it reach the truth end appropriate it for themselves, and through it the Holy Spirit comes to be in them as real, actual, and present, and has its abode in them; it means that the truth is in them, and that they are in a condition to enjoy and give active expression to the truth or Spirit, that they as individuals are those who give active expression to the Spirit.⁴³

For Hegel, the Church is a "thinking as well as loving and practical communion. It *thinks* the contents of the gospel narratives and of the Christian sentiment in the form of *the Faith*."⁴⁴ Hegel's anti-Pietism is never seen more clearly or more usefully at work than in his insistence that "dogma is necessary, and must be taught as valid truth." It is not sufficient that the Community feel, it must also think. When the Son of Man comes again, will He find knowledge? Hegel asks.

Proper appreciation of the importance of the sacraments is evident to Hegel. If he was not a Romanist, neither was he a sectarian.

The Eucharist is the central point of the doctrine of Christianity, and the highest act of worship. While, on the one hand, the constant preservation of the Church . . . is the continued repetition of the life, passion, and resurrection of Christ in the members of the Church, this, on the other hand, is expressly accomplished in the sacraments of the Lord's Supper.

Thus he holds the Lutheran rather than the Catholic or Zwinglian view.

We will ask one final question of this Hegelian exposition of Christianity. How does it compare with the

Church's exposition as embodied in the historic Church creeds? In spite of many points of some similarity between the Christian and Hegelian doctrine, I fear that the differences are fundamental and radical. Hegel may be correct but I doubt if it can be maintained with any seriousness that he is orthodox. His view of revelation we have already sufficiently criticized. Certainly his conception of the Trinity is not that of the Church which believes in a single substantial identity, God, in which single substance there are three Persons. The Hegelian Trinity is at most a ghost of this. In the Hegelian deity the world is implicit, or at least the idea of an other is implicit. The Church would question first whether this otherness is a concrete world at all; second, it would deny that if it were a world it emanated necessarily from the nature of God; and, third, the Church affirms that this "other" is not the world but the Son of God.

Again, according to the church, God saw His world that is was good, not evil. Hegel's identification of finitude and evil is a distinctly pagan conception that, so far as I know, has never found expression in a creed of any orthodox Christian Church. Hegel's insistence that the world, including man, is in a sense good does not offset the radicalness of his departure from the church at this point.

Lastly, if the Church and the Bible be not in error then Christ came into the world to save sinners and not to merge finitude in the infinite. Since Hegel's conception of sin is different from that of the Church, it follows that his notion of grace and associated doctrines must be diverge. Christ came not to call the finite to repentance but sinners; not to preach a metaphysical reconciliation but an ethical one; not to make man into God, but like unto God.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁴⁴ Sterrett, J. MacBride, *Studies in Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, p. 297.